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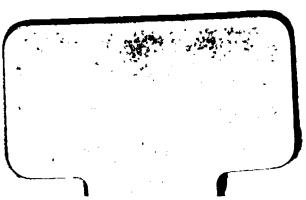
CLOUDS AND LIGHT



CLOUDS AND LIGHT.

CLOUDS AND LIGHT.

BY

ROSE LA TOUCHE.

"He wearieth the thick cloud:
He scattereth His bright cloud. . . . .
And caused the light of His cloud to shine. . . . .
Men see not the bright light which is in the clouds."

JOB xxxvii. 11, 15, 21.

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TO EDITH.

I DEDICATE my book to you, Edith, wishing, indeed, that it was more worthy of your acceptance, more sunshiny and less imperfect. I can only hope that, possibly for its author's sake, it may help to brighten some shadowy hour, as its dedication has brought back to me the happy memory of the sunny hours we have spent together.

PREFACE.

IT has always seemed to me vain to apologise in the preface for what one has written, however deeply sensible one may be of its imperfections. But if there are any words in this book which will help those who are suffering to look up and believe hopefully in the bright light which is *in the clouds*, I shall feel thankful for the dark hours in which they were written, and more confident of the belief which I would strengthen in others, that no suffering is unnecessary or in vain.

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AN ALLEGORY.

AN ALLEGORY.

It was the night before Ascension Day. I sat in my room alone, thinking. I thought so long that perhaps I got tired, perhaps I fell asleep; but I saw this:—

It was a long plain, and there were hills on each side in the distance, and many roads that stretched away towards the hills. There were fields, and gardens, and cottages, and pieces of waste ground, and rocks, and people coming and going. I sat on the roadside and looked down one of the roads. The sun shone full upon two figures coming towards me, with a little child beside them, and when I looked at them I could not take my eyes away. One was tall and fair, dressed in long white garments, which yet did not touch the ground, for they were caught up at her waist by a golden

girdle, and as she walked no spot of dust fell on them. In her hand she had a staff, and by her side hung a golden dagger sheathed. I looked up at her face, for she stood still a moment near me in the sunlight. It was a strong beautiful young face without a cloud over it. She had deep blue eyes, not bright but grave, yet full of light, as though they saw far into hidden things, and long fair hair twisted and plaited over her neck, not golden but gleaming and shaded, as if the light and shadows were both woven through and through it.

Strong and true and pure she looked, and I did not need the voice that spoke to me, to tell me her name was Truth. Hand in hand with her came her sister, and I knew that her name was Love. She was very, very beautiful, far more beautiful, more tender and radiant, less calm and strong. Her long soft garments trailed in the dust behind her and floated in the wind, yet they remained unspotted, and seemed at times to take the form of angels' wings. She was dark, but with that wonderful darkness that seems made of light. In her eyes was that wonderful radiance which none but eyes that look straight to heaven can have. And looking into her eyes I

felt that heaven was near, and I hardly noticed how she was dressed, only that in her hand she held some crimson roses, and some green leaves, which, I think, were healing herbs. By her side, leaning his cheek against her white hand, and half hiding his face in the roses, stood the little child Hope. He had bright beautiful eyes and a smile like a little cherub, and cheeks and lips like the young rose-buds themselves, but I could not see whether he was dark or fair; it seemed to me that he altered with every sunbeam.

Now, as I looked I saw that a shadow stood behind Love, like the ghost of a human form. While I gazed it vanished and then appeared again, and I could scarcely distinguish it, but I thought I could trace the form of a beautiful youth blindfold, with a bow and arrows at his side, and something glittering in his hand. I thought of the legends of the ancients, of Eros, of the god who had eyes and saw not, of the arrows that wounded, and did not heal; and I shuddered and looked at Love. She was walking straight on, with the little child Hope still clinging to her hand, and I noticed that she never looked behind. The figure followed her closely, half hidden sometimes by the folds

of her flowing garments, and I saw that it shrank and vanished (though only to appear again), whenever Truth looked round; and this she did often, as though she would be very sure that they had taken the right road.

Behind Truth also was a form. It changed and changed as I looked at it, and vanished when Truth turned round. Sometimes it took the form of an angel, sometimes of a human being, sometimes it looked like a fiend, but it had always a serpent clinging to its right hand.

The forms passed me as I sat by the roadside, and a voice spoke to me through the distance, "Wilt thou learn knowledge out of suffering?" I answered, "Yes." "Then follow these." And immediately I became invisible and followed them.

We came to a great bright meadow where were many beautiful flowers. Love sat down and picked them with her delicate white hands, and Truth stood still and rested on her staff. Hope ran backwards and forwards chasing butterflies, gathering flowers, and singing happy songs. All the flowers, and one or two white butterflies, which he had hurt in catching, he brought to Love and dropped into her lap, and she caressed and fondled him. Truth watched

him with kind sweet eyes, but I saw that he seemed afraid of her, and often hid his face in her sister's lap when she looked at him. "Little brother, why do you hurt the butterflies?" she said. "They are so happy hovering in the sunshine, and when you catch them you wound them and then they die."

"There are more," said Hope; but I saw that his lip quivered, and he would have cried if Love had not kissed him, and given him her roses to play with. Then he grew bright and happy again, and danced round Love, and ran far on into the meadow.

"Why is the child so timid?" said Love, as she turned to her sister. "I can never find it in my heart to reprove him, and a word from you who are so kind and wise seems completely to terrify him. He is so light-hearted and eager, so radiantly happy by nature that I cannot bear to see him sorrowful, and always grow sad myself when he is unhappy. How is it, my sister? What makes him afraid of you?"

Truth looked down into her sister's face with her kind grave eyes, and I heard her answer, "He should not be afraid of me. He would keep his happy smile longer if he stayed beside me, and I would keep him from all harm and

disappointment; but the child has not found out yet what is real and what is unreal in the world. He is like one of the white butterflies himself. All the mortals pet him so, but just when they are fondest of him he runs away, and sometimes though they cry ever so bitterly he does not come back again—and such a little thing will frighten him away! But it is his nature to be timid. I have heard it said that none but those who know him not are thoroughly incapable of fear, and yet those who know him best are the most courageous."

At that moment I saw a fearful shadow like a human form standing in the meadow, at a little distance from where Hope was playing. It was all dark, with a face so rigid and terrible that it made me tremble. It had the form of a man, and in its hand was a sword, which it appeared to plunge into its bosom, and yet remained unharmed. Hope was picking flowers and chasing butterflies, and came running towards the place where the shadow stood without looking up. Suddenly a lark rose up out of the grass and flew towards heaven. The blue eyes of the child followed it instantly, and in a moment the shadow disappeared.

"That is Despair," said a voice to me, "the

fiend who conquers mortals, and who is worse than Death, because he is immortal; but he cannot bear for a moment one glance of the little child Hope, and to those who love the little one he can never appear."

Then I understood that each figure had a shadow which haunted it, and only fled on being looked at, though, except to my eyes, these shadows were invisible. Behind Truth stood Error, dark and gloomy, with the snake round his right hand, yet able at times to transform himself into the likeness of an angel of light, or even of that being which he followed. Behind Love stood Eros, the blind god who knew not light from darkness, and loved both; and, following the child Hope at a distance, I saw again the terrible fiend Despair, with the sword drawn in his hand, ever ready to plunge it into his bosom, and yet remaining unhurt.

Presently I saw that Love had wandered away from Truth, and was following Hope through the meadow. So Truth stood alone grave and silent, and followed them with her eyes. And Love picked a garland of roses and wound them into her little brother's hair, but the thorns pricked him, and he flung them down and left them to wither.

Presently Love took him up in her arms and carried him. He leant his head upon her neck and whispered to her, and she smiled down into his eyes. I did not wonder that he loved her the best. She was so very beautiful, so tender, and her whole heart stood in her eyes; and Truth was perhaps a little cold and grave, at least if it was not for her smile and the deep sweetness of her blue thoughtful eyes.

But she had a charm for me that drew my whole heart towards her with inexpressible longing. I would have given up my whole soul to be made like hers—I would have gone through anything for her sake. Yet she could not see me as I gazed and gazed upon her, nor hear the cry of my heart which rose up to my lips, "I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest."

Suddenly I heard a cry of pain from far off in the field, and then the voice of Love calling earnestly to her sister. And Truth rose up instantly and caught up her staff (for she had been resting) and went across the field.

To my astonishment the shade that had been behind Truth all this time now went before her till she came to the place where Love stood. She was weeping and wringing her hands. The little child Hope lay at her feet quite senseless.

His beautiful eyes were closed, and the water dripped from his long gleaming curls, and had drenched his green and white garments; his hands and arms were scratched and bleeding, and a long trail of bramble with cruel thorns hung to his neck; even Truth, with her firm gentle hands, could not at once loosen its hold.

"How is this?" she said. But Love answered not, for she was crying too bitterly. She bent over the form of the little child and kissed him and wept over him till he half awoke. "He will live," said Truth, and she raised him up in her arms. "You must let me carry him now, my sister, and he shall not be hurt again. But why did you let him stray away from you and attempt to cross the hedge out of the meadow? Did you not know of the deep black stream on the other side?"

"He ran on and on," said Love, "and we saw white roses in the hedge, and I followed him; but he ran too fast for me, and they were not white roses, but brambles; and when I came up to him he had fallen into the deep water, and I could only raise him in my arms and carry him senseless back through the briars, and lay him down here. Now you are come he will live;

but I know that we ought not to have strayed from you."

Truth said no word of reproach, only held her sister's hand, and replied, "We will walk together now;" and then she carried the child to a little brook of pure water that ran through the meadow, and bathed his face and arms, and drew out all the thorns. Love wept as each thorn was taken away, and smiled whenever Hope opened his eyes and tried to raise his weary head, now resting on Truth's shoulder. I noticed that she neither smiled nor wept, but most tenderly soothed the child, and he seemed no longer afraid of her, but perfectly at rest, as he lay in her strong loving arms. She stroked his hair, and it grew golden and radiant, and kissed his forehead, and his beautiful eyes shone, and his own happy smile came back; and I saw that the shade, who had gone before Truth and bent over him, now shrank back and crept into the distance far behind. Very soon Hope was perfectly himself again—it was as though he woke from a deep swoon, and had forgotten all his pain, for he was at once bright and playful again. But I noticed that he kept close to Truth, at her side, or else a little

behind her, following in her footsteps, and not, as before, running on in front of Love.

"Now I am sure he will be quite safe," I said; "that is the best place for the little one, and Truth is the best guardian; for Love can only follow where the child leads and fears no evil."

Then I saw that they came to a gate leading out of the meadow, and they opened it, and stood in a narrow lane, with a path in the middle and trees on each side.

"Oh," said Hope, "it is dark here! it must be going to rain. Let us go back into the meadow."

"Silly child," said Truth, "it is dark because the sun shines and the trees cast shadows. You are more wanted here than in the bright glaring meadow; and besides, little brother, if it was going to rain, would not the trees shelter us the most?"

So Hope only laughed and was satisfied. As they walked slowly on, I noticed that the shade, Error, again slipped in front of Truth, and ran along the roadside, and I saw that wherever he passed he bent the shoots and twigs of the young trees into strange shapes, and fastened down the stronger branches, so that they could

not grow straight. There was hardly a young tree by the whole roadside that he did not bend or tie down with strong invisible cord; yet he had no knife, and I saw that he *injured* nothing, and hardly touched the branches of the larger trees. "Oh that I could warn Truth!" I said to myself; but my lips were dumb. "She could put a stop to this, but she will never notice that the branches are tied down, and even if she did the harm is done." But I was mistaken.

Hope was climbing up a tree looking for birds' nests, singing and shouting with happiness, when suddenly he caught his foot in a long twisted bough and would have fallen, had not Truth caught him in her arms. She put him safely on the ground, and then she drew out her sharp golden dagger, and I saw that with a touch as she passed she cut through all the invisible bands that Error had tied, and each bough sprang up behind her straight and free. I thought she smiled then, but her face grew earnestly sorrowful as she looked up at some of the stronger branches and warped shapeless trees which no power of hers could alter now, and which seemed to say, "You have come too late; we were young once, but we were bent out of our shape, and were turned

away from you, and now your help is vain, and it is no more possible for us to change."

Love, who was close to her sister, was absorbed in looking at the little flowers on the other side of the way. I saw her take the withered leaves away with her gentle hands, and lift off the caterpillars and little insects from the delicate blossoms, and drop them instead into the strong, healthy grass. It seemed to me that all the flowers smiled at her, and grew brighter as she passed. And she seemed to love all alike, and the very commonest weed became full of beauty under her smile. She had wonderful eyes—so full of the light of heaven that they threw a radiance over everything she looked upon, and nothing beautiful or lovely in anything, however small or insignificant, ever missed her sight.

I saw that the shadow behind Love followed her closely; and though I noticed that at present his eyes were unbound, he never glanced at the flowers, till they came to a place where there was a garden of roses at one side of the road. Such glorious roses! Of all shades and colours, passionate crimson and pure white, and pale, flushing pink. And there were golden roses too, and all nameless hues—a perfect

Paradise of roses. Little Hope shouted for joy, and would have run in among them, had not Truth kept him by her side; and this was well, for the roses grew so thick and tall that he would almost have been lost among them, and certainly hurt and scratched. Love gathered some of the most exquisite crimson buds, and grouped with them their own tender green leaves, and other white angelic blossoms, and little pink child-faced buds. They looked still more beautiful in her hands, and she kissed them and caressed them, and would have gathered more, but Truth stopped her, for she said they would wither so quickly, and in carrying them she might drop some of her healing herbs. I saw that already she had lost some of these, and that her hands were wounded with the roses' thorns; but I do not think Love noticed this herself. By and by they walked on, and I saw the dark shadow that had followed Love leaping in among the roses and gathering them greedily. He flung away the white ones, and left them lying bruised and stained upon the path, but he filled his arms with glorious crimson blossoms till he could gather no more, and their petals fell around him in a crimson shower. He hardly touched

their leaves, and their thorns did not appear to injure him at all. I gazed and gazed and gazed in wonder, for instead of a shadow he now became tall and strong, a gloriously handsome youth, with a face like an ancient god. But there was something terrible and fearful in its beauty, like the glory of the angels when they fell. He stood upright and grasped his bow in his hand, dropping the roses as he did so. Then he strung it, and taking the arrows out of his quiver, he chose them one by one, and took cruel aim at the most perfect of the rose-blossoms. The arrows shuddered in among them, and flower after flower fell; not a single blossom remained upright, even those that were not struck drooped and fell down and withered as if by magic. The whole garden was devastated, and as I looked I saw Eros shrink back again into the same dark shadowy form, and treading through the fallen roses, pass swiftly down the road after Truth and Love.

They never looked round, so they could not have known what had happened. Love and Hope were sitting on a green bank by the road-side, and Truth stood beside them, and two little children were coming towards them hand in hand.

One was fair and pale, with a very gentle face and brown eyes, and at first sight I thought they must be twins, for his companion was so like him; but as they came nearer, I saw that he was far less fragile looking, with thick colourless hair, black eyes, and a dull expression.

I do not think Truth saw them, for her face was turned away, but the shadow that stood behind her did; and came forward and hid himself by the roadside where the two children would pass. I saw how the snake uncoiled itself from his right hand and crouched in the grass, watching the children with bright, glittering eyes. The little, fair child was nearest to the place where Error was hidden, and I watched him as he came past. He had some white lilies in his hand, and he was looking up at the sky as he walked. The sunlight fell upon his fair hair, and it shone like fine gold. He looked like a stray angel, only just a little too delicate and frail. Then it flashed across me that I had seen that child before, and I knew his name was Innocence—the little fearless child, whose eyes looked ever up to heaven, and yet were never dazzled by its light, nor terrified by the darkness of the earth; and behind him came

Ignorance, with his head bent down, looking at the ground, and his dark eyelashes half dropped over his eyes, for he was short-sighted, and the light hurt him.

Suddenly Innocence gave a cry of pain, and fell to the ground. Truth was at his side in an instant. I saw her grasp the snake in her strong hands, for it had already fixed its venomous fangs in the child's neck, and throw it far away; and I saw how the shade shrank back behind her as she came up, and almost disappeared, but it seemed to me that in passing it left a shadow on the face of the little child.

Ignorance ran away and hid himself. But Innocence bore the pain bravely, and stood up for an instant, leaning on Truth's arm, and thanked her for her help, and then fainted. The snake had hurt him terribly. Love came up to his side, and laid her healing herbs on the wound, and raised his head in her arms; but he never looked up or opened his eyes. He was very pale, so pale that I thought he was dead.

Little Hope came running up like a sunbeam, strong and radiant, and as he bent over Innocence, the colour came back into the child's

cheeks (though very faint and pale), and the shadow passed away from his face, and instead there came a smile. Hope looked up joyfully. "He will live, he will live!" he cried; "he will be my little brother, and we will play together, for you know I am lonely sometimes. Will you not get strong and well now?"

But Innocence only smiled and stretched out his little white hand to Hope, and looked up to heaven; and the sunlight streamed over his golden hair and into his radiant eyes, and took his soul away. He lay on the ground dead, with the white lilies by his side. And Truth could not weep, but stood over him calm and strong, with her deep, sorrowful eyes; and Love wept as a mother for the child that she loves best; only Hope still smiled. He said, "I will keep the lilies and put them in water, and they shall blossom still, and I will bring them to Innocence one day; for I am sure he is happy, very, very happy, somewhere far away, and I shall find him again and come to him. Shall I not?" and he looked up wistfully at Truth. She did not answer, and only kissed him tenderly; but Love was comforted.

Then they walked on together, but Truth was still very sorrowful, and only spoke of the little

child. "I had known him before," she said, "and there was nothing on the whole earth more dear to me; for when he was quite an infant I carried him in my arms, and now the earth is very dark and sad to me. It is well for Innocence, he who could not bear to hear of sorrow, and who did not know of sin, that at the first trouble he died, and only knew of suffering as the doorway into heaven. But for me it is a long dreary way, and I may not hide my eyes from suffering and sorrow, nor cease to fight against sin; and yet in the end I can do so little, and am either unknown or hated in this weary, evil world!"

I saw that as Truth said this she dropped her staff, and as she bent to pick it up again, Love and Hope passed on.

But Truth was not alone, for on a green bank on one side of the road, under an olive tree, sat a young girl. She had some roses in her lap, but they were half withered, and she crushed them in her hands. Yet she did not look unhappy, and I wondered why Truth stopped and gazed at her with such tenderly mournful eyes; but I saw that for the time she had forgotten her own sorrow.

The girl sat with her head bent down, as

though she was thinking, and did not raise her eyes till Truth came close to her; then she looked up straight into Truth's eyes, and her lips moved as though she would have spoken, but no sound came.

"My child," said Truth, "you have wanted me, for I never come except to those who need my help, and I never leave those who seek for me till I have given them help. Tell me, what can I do for you?"

"*Will* you help me?" said the girl; and as she looked up the second time, I saw that indeed she needed help, for on her face was the shadow of deep pain; and yet, I know not why, it reminded me of the face of the child Hope.

"I have lost my way," she said (for Truth was silent, and only answered the girl by taking her hand); "I did not mind at first, for this path was so beautiful; but now I am tired, and I do not know where this road will lead to, nor which way to take. So I sat under this olive tree and waited, and Love and Hope went by, but I was too tired to follow them. And now I must not wait here any longer, for my Father's home is far off, and yet I must be journeying there before night. If you know the way, tell me."

"I will guide you," answered Truth, "if you will be guided by me, my child, whether the way be bright, or long and hard."

So Truth took her by the hand and led her a little way down the road to another path, and I saw that the shade that had followed Truth ran on in front and stood in the pathway, so that he cast a shadow down it, and made it look very dark and gloomy.

"This is your way," said Truth. "Go straight on and fear not. I will come to you again if you are in difficulty."

"But it is fearfully dark," said the girl, with a shudder; then she added, looking up into Truth's eyes, "Must I go down this dark path alone, and turn away from all that is beautiful here?"

"Nothing is beautiful that leads away from home," answered Truth. "Farewell, my child —stay, I will give you this," and she put her own staff into the girl's hand. "Now, go straight on. You will come to a path that leads across a common; there you must walk carefully, for it will be getting dark, and it is full of holes, and there are crags, and pieces of stone strewn about. Only fear not, but be watchful and go on towards the mountain," and Truth pointed to

the foot of one of the distant hills. "I will meet you again," she added, as she turned away.

The girl grasped the staff that Truth had given her, and for the first time I noticed the word "Fides" written in gold letters round the top. "This will help her," I thought. She walked straight down the entrance of the path, and I saw the shade Error start back and flee away as he caught sight of the staff of Truth, while a broad ray of sunlight streamed down upon the pathway, and it looked no more dark. Yet still it was a long and lonely way, with the common at the end stretching far into the distance, and the great black hill beyond.

I watched the girl till she was out of sight, and then turned and followed Truth. When she came up with Love and Hope, they were sitting in a garden under an apple-tree. Some little distance off stood the child Ignorance, looking gloomily down on the ground. He started as Truth came near, and would have shrunk away, but Love called him back. Then Truth came up to her sister and told her all she had done, and little Hope's eyes grew bright and eager as he listened.

"We must go to the foot of the mountain and

meet her there before night," he said, "and then the way will not be so long and gloomy."

But Truth did not answer him, and Love sighed, "She will need my help or healing before she gets across that terrible common. You do not know how hard and dreary it is, my sister, for you are dismayed by nothing; very few have walked there alone in safety, and though you showed her the right way when she had wandered from it, I alone can keep her from turning back now. I can keep her from being discouraged, and may help her to endure cheerfully all the perils and hardships of the way."

"Be at rest, sister," said Truth; "she has my staff 'Faith.' It would be no kindness to mortals to make the way always easy to them. We shall see her again, and she will not say then that the journey was too hard or long."

Then they all sat silent under the apple-tree for a time, till Ignorance gave a shout of gladness, and said that there were ripe apples on the trees, and he must climb up and pick some. Up in the very top branches there were quantities of beautiful apples, at least, so they appeared to me; but as Ignorance picked them greedily and threw them down to Hope, I could see that

only the outsides were fair and good, and inside they were utterly bad and soft. Hope took them in his hands, but threw them down again quickly with a little cry of disappointment. But Ignorance came down from the tree with his arms full, and began eating them greedily, only Truth stopped him. She picked them up from the ground and threw them away, but Ignorance hid two under his dress, and sat down by Hope, looking sullen and gloomy.

"The tree has such beautiful leaves," said Love, "I wish we could do anything to make it bear better fruit."

"Yes," said Truth, gravely, "but at least it must deceive no longer, and disappoint people by its falsely beautiful fruit." And with her golden dagger she cut away the apples that hung within her reach; and then, as she shook the stem of the tree, all the remaining ones fell at her feet, and I noticed that, as they fell, they shrank and looked utterly loathsome.

"Now, I do not think any one will be deceived again," said Truth. "Come away, for this is not a good place for the children."

But Love said, "No. Do *you* take the little ones, for I would fain see what is wrong with the soil or the roots of this tree, and try if, by

any means, I may get it one day to bear good fruit."

"Oh, yes," said Hope, "let us try, and I will stay and help you." But Ignorance muttered gloomily, "It is good enough as it is." Truth said, "You are right, my sister; you shall take my golden dagger and graft into it a shoot from a better apple-tree, and it may be that in the end, it will bring forth fruit unto perfection. You are a better gardener than I am, for I can only prune the trees and cut away their fruitless branches, while you can almost change their nature with your tender care." So Love stayed behind, and Truth and Hope and Ignorance went on together.

They came to a place where the road stopped, and there they sat down to rest. Many people passed by, all going towards the great common, where they separated and took different ways. I wondered that Truth did not speak to them, for some of them looked very sorrowful, and many were carrying heavy burdens, and looked perplexed and full of pain. But Truth was silent and still, and though they passed close to her she appeared to be invisible to their eyes. Some beckoned to Hope to come with them, and he looked up and smiled,

and would follow them a little way, and then grow shy and come back to Truth.

Presently some girls and boys came past, laughing and talking. They called to Ignorance, and took him by the hand, and he followed them willingly, but they were too rough for him—they pulled the apples out of his pocket, and told him that they could get him far finer ones that were "black all through, and all the better for that." And they asked him questions, and told him things he did not understand, and walked so fast that he grew tired and crept back to Truth. She was not alone now, for beside her stood two men, and a beautiful little boy was playing with Hope. He was so like Innocence that I almost thought the dead child had come back again to life, only that he looked a little older and stronger, and his eyes were a deep blue instead of golden brown. He had a little bunch of wild flowers in his hand, and in the other some strange creeping insects, which he was showing to Hope, and he did not seem at all to mind their crawling over his little white hand. This was Purity, and beside Truth stood Wisdom and Experience. Wisdom held some books under his arm, and had a kind, grave face. He

held out his hand to Ignorance, and drew him to his side, and the boy looked up with a smile, brighter than any I had seen upon his face before. Experience also had a book in his hand full of notes of the way, and sketches and comments that he had made himself; and his face, though strong and handsome, was somewhat careworn and stern. Ignorance shrank from him, and I did not wonder, for he looked like a strict and even severe teacher, whereas Wisdom had the look of a loving father with kind and wise eyes. Experience was talking to Truth (and I noticed that though she looked at Ignorance when he came back, she said not a word of reproach to him for having strayed away); he was showing her the sketches he had taken by the way, and describing the difficult paths he had come, and the perils he had encountered, and the adventures that had befallen him.

"I met this little child," he said, pointing to Purity, "wandering by himself, far away on one of those wild hills; it was evening, and a terrible storm was coming on, and he was quite alone. I asked him where he was going, and he told me that he had been sent by his Father, who lived far away, to look for his brothers and

sisters among the mortals, but that he had not found them, and was now going home the shortest way. I told him (for I knew where his Father lived), that the shortest way was too difficult for him, and that I could show him an easier and plainer road, which in the end would not be much longer. He smiled, and said that nothing was difficult to him; but as it was getting dark, and he hardly knew his way among the rocks, I brought him down with me. In the morning we met Wisdom at the foot of the hill, and we came on here together."

Purity looked up and smiled at Truth.

"I was not at all afraid alone on the hill-top yesterday," he said. "It was very, very beautiful, and I watched the sunset, and looked down over the great wide common, and the roads stretching across it, and the dark figures coming and going. And I do not think I should have minded to spend the night up there alone, but Experience thought some harm might happen to me, and he was so good and kind I could not refuse to come with him."

Truth smiled, and then she bent down and kissed him—perhaps he reminded her of Innocence.

"You have a safe guide," she said, "my

little one; at least, if such as you need any guide."

And Wisdom answered, "You are right there; the child is perhaps more fitted to be our guide than we are to be his. I knew him when he was an infant at his Father's house, and what it has taken me years and years to learn he knew almost by nature. Although he is so young, his little child-eyes seem to see further into everything, and his child-mind judges more truly than we do with all our learning," and Wisdom sighed and looked so long towards Purity (who had turned away, and was playing with Hope), that he never noticed how one by one the heavy books that he carried dropped from under his arm. Meantime Purity was showing Hope the little black crawling things that he still held in his hand.

"I don't like them," said Hope. "Drop them down. I only like butterflies."

So Purity put them down among the flowers and grass, and told Hope such curious stories about their natures and ways, reminding him how his playfellows the butterflies were caterpillars once, that even Ignorance got interested and came up to his side and listened. I noticed

that Experience seldom took his eyes off Hope's face, and seemed strangely charmed by the child's bright radiant smile. There was something touching in the way in which he watched the child, and the longing, loving look that came over his stern features.

"Come to me," he said at last, "little sunbeam, and look at my pictures. Will you tell me your name?" for Hope came to him directly, and he lifted him up in his arms.

"I am Hope," said the boy, who was already pulling at the sketch book. "Oh, your pictures are not half bright enough. See, I will draw you a picture of the Land we are coming to," and Hope drew out the paint-box, and without waiting for permission he touched up Experience's sketches and painted a lovely little picture at the end of his book with green fields, and happy sunshine, and a river, and blue hills.

"Thank you, my little angel," said Experience, and his face looked no more stern. "I shall keep your picture always, and look at it every day, and your little face in my heart, and then I do not think I shall mind how long and rough the journey before me may be. Will you not give me one lock of your golden hair?"

So Hope gave a little curl of his shining

hair, like a ray of light. And Experience kissed him, and put it in his breast, and turned away.

Now I noticed that Truth seemed troubled and looked back often, for it was getting late, and Love had not yet joined them. And as she watched for her, I saw the shade Eros suddenly come up the path, pass close before Truth, and then disappear. I thought Truth shuddered as he passed her, and yet certainly she had not seen him, though she had looked straight down the road by which he came, watching for Love. Presently Hope called out joyfully, "She is coming! she is coming!" and ran forward to meet her. And Love came near, holding her little brother by the hand, and stood beside Truth, and gave her back her golden dagger, and told her all that had befallen since they parted.

"I think the tree will bear good fruit now," she said; "I have done all I could for it, and it is not often that I labour in vain. You must come back and see it after a time, my sister, and then if it remains bad we must indeed cut it down."

Upon this, Purity, who had been listening, looked up into Love's face with wondering eyes, and said, "Why does the tree bear bad fruit? and why must you cut it down?"

But when Love was going to answer, Wisdom stopped her, "It is of no use trying to explain to the child anything about evil, for he cannot understand it; it is as if he walked through the world blindfold, and yet was taught and guided by heavenly instinct. But of Sin he knows nothing, and of Suffering very little; for the one flees away whenever he approaches, and the other he is given power to heal with the light of his fearless eyes and the touch of his small white hands." And Wisdom took up Purity in his arms (which were empty, now that he had dropped his books), and carried him off among some olive trees, looking like one of the grave old saints of ancient pictures, "bearing a lily in his hand."

Then Truth turned to her sister, "It is getting late," she said, "and we ought to be going on, for we have a long way before us." So they went on together, and Hope ran on in front; but Ignorance lingered behind, and then crept after Wisdom into the olive wood. Presently I heard Hope give a little cry of terror, and run back to Truth and Love.

"It is very dark further on," he said, "and there are people talking, and—I will stay here, I think." And though Love tried to reassure

him, it was no use—he sat down trembling on the grass, and turned his face away.

"We must leave the child," said Truth, "for I know that I am wanted, and you must come with me; but we will not be away long—come;" and Love followed her sorrowfully, for it made her unhappy to leave the little child behind.

And when they were gone, Hope fell fast asleep among the grass and flowers, and did not once look after them. But the path Truth and Love had taken was very, very dark. On each side of it grew yews and cypresses that cast dark shadows and shut out the light, and tall rank plants grew at their feet; and among them I saw the deadly nightshade, with its blue poisonous berries. But in one place the path widened, and a gleam of sunshine fell upon some scarlet passion-flowers and half-withered crimson roses that were lying in the grass with faded leaves, as though they had been thrown there by some passer-by. And soon I saw that we were not alone, for from under the trees came two figures hand in hand. Close beside them, indeed almost between them, for he seemed to have one hand on the shoulder of each, stood the shade Eros, but in so strange and altered a form that I should scarcely have known him. He had a

face like a fiend in pain, and dark wings upon his shoulders, which seemed to cast a darkness across the faces in front of him; and as they came nearer to us and looked up, I saw a strange and indescribable likeness in their expression to his. One was a girl in trailing white garments, which had got torn and stained; but her face, except for the shadow thrown on it, was beautiful—pale, with long brown hair, pushed back, and hanging loose, and large gleaming eyes. She was speaking earnestly. "All day I have sought for you, and have only met you now. Why were you so late? Before night I must be at home, and it is dark already. Yet how can I leave you now?" and as she spoke she leant closer to her companion. He had grasped her hand in both of his, and as he looked into her face I saw that he too was pale and very dark, but with wild light in his eyes. She trembled in his gaze and shrank back, and at that moment Truth came close to her. The sunlight which was behind them streamed suddenly on her whole face and lit up her golden hair. For an instant the girl looked straight into Truth's face, and the whole expression of her countenance changed suddenly. She started back from her companion, and drew away her hand.

"Oh, leave me!" she said. "I have waited for you all day, but now it is dark and late; I must go home, and I do not know my way; farewell." Her voice did not tremble, but instead of turning away, with a look of passionate sorrow she bent down and caught up the withered roses and scarlet passion-flowers at her feet.

The youth sprang forward and caught her in his arms. "You shall not leave me," he said. "Your way is mine now, for your heart is mine."

Truth came close beside him, and laid her hand upon the girl. But she was utterly unconscious of it now, and did not speak or struggle to resist. Through the shadow that the form Eros seemed to throw across them, I saw him grasp her hand again and cover her pale cheeks with hot passionate kisses. A gleam of something golden and a cry, and the girl sank down upon the grass bleeding and fainting.

She was alone now with Love and Truth; but Love stood in the background with her face turned away, and Truth bent over her and drew out her golden dagger with firm unfaltering hands. She had plunged it into the girl's side, and cut her hand away from the grasp of the

youth who, at the first sight of Truth's weapon (for she herself was invisible to him) had fled back into the darkness, and vanished among the black yew branches.

All was silent. The slanting gleams of the sun fell on the girl's face, which was dark with pain; but the shades Eros and Error were no longer at her side, and only Truth bent over her. She was grave as ever, but her deep loving eyes rested on the girl's face, and watched every movement there, though she did nothing for her. Presently she rose up and went towards her sister. I saw the girl's eyes following her wistfully, but as she tried to raise herself and turn in Truth's direction, she fell back and fainted again with pain.

And Truth, though her face was turned away, seemed to know that the girl had wished to follow her, for I heard her saying, "She is saved. She will live, my sister, and will live to follow me. And now she will love the light and straight paths, and shrink from that which only lives in darkness." Then Love and Truth came back together and stood by the maiden's side. And she looked up at them with large gleaming eyes, and tried to speak, but Truth and Love understood her, and bade her be silent. So she

only lay and gazed at them till it seemed to me her face grew in some faint degree like theirs, and she seemed to forget her pain; and Love laid some of her healing herbs upon her side, and it seemed to heal beneath their touch. But when she would have laid them on the wound on the girl's right arm, she found that some were lost, and would have gone back to seek for them, but Truth stopped her. "That may not be," she said. "Leave it; it is better so. I will take all the pain away in time, but we are powerless to restore that which, from being joined to evil, I was forced to cut away." And Truth tore off a little piece of her own white raiment and bound up the wounded wrist; and I noticed that the girl never flinched, but looked up into Truth's eyes, and though her own were filled with tears, there was a grateful loving look on her pale face, which I am sure Truth saw, for she bent down and kissed her.

But Love was distressed because of the stains and tears in the girl's white raiment, and tried to brush the dust away, and under her delicate fingers it became white and whole again.

"And now," said Truth, "we must leave you, and when we come again we will bring the little child Hope with us; but you must rest

here now, and when you grow stronger I will show you the shortest way out of these shadows, and back into the light. But you must follow my guidance, even though you are tired and weak, and go no more into so dark a place as this."

And as Truth turned away, I saw the girl raise herself and stretch out a weak hand towards the dying passion-flowers and roses that still lay at her feet; but Truth looked back and turned and held her hand. "No, my child," she said firmly, "these are no more for you. You must leave them with the darkness and the past, and forget them if you can. If you take them in your hands they will but wither, and in withering stain your garments. Farewell."

So Truth and Love went back to Hope, and they found him asleep in the warm grass with a bunch of wild heartsease in his hand, and the lilies that he had kept after the death of Innocence still by his side. They woke him, and he started up joyfully with his own radiant smile.

Then Truth told him a little about the girl, and asked him to come and see her; and Love took him by the hand, and they went back down the lane together. Hope still held his little bouquet of heartsease, and the white lilies

drooped across his arms. So they came together to the place where the girl sat waiting for them. When Truth left, she had got up and tried to follow her a little way, but soon fell back exhausted. And Hope ran up to her and put the dark heartsease into her hand, and laid a white lily down upon her lap; and never saw that in doing so he had crushed the fallen roses and passion-flowers completely under his small feet. And then he sat down beside her and talked to her, or rather, it seemed to me, smiled at her; and the girl sat right up and smiled also, and seemed to grow stronger and happier at each word.

How her face had changed! for now, instead of the dark shadow thrown across it by the evil spirits as they stood beside her in the lane, there shone the reflection of Truth's noble purity, and through all the sorrow and suffering in her face, I saw a gleam of Hope's own heaven-born smile.

After a time Truth came up to her, and the girl rose up and walked tremblingly to meet her; but had not Truth supported her she would have fallen. "I am stronger now," she said. "Will you show me the way home?" So Truth took her by the hand and led her slowly

on, while Love and Hope went hand in hand in front. And I noticed that, in going back, the walk was all uphill, though, coming down it, it appeared smooth and flat; and many a time the girl would have fainted had not Truth supported her; but Truth never spoke to her, nor offered to let her rest, and the girl walked bravely on.

By and by her long white garments tripped her up and she fell, and then Truth raised her and called to Hope to come and sit beside her while she rested for a time. And before they went on again, Truth girded up the girl's white raiment with her own golden belt, that she might not stumble again; and on the belt was written—OBEDIENCE.

So they went on slowly; and as they walked together, the face of the girl grew more and more like that of her companion, and all evil shadows and memories seemed to have passed away from it, though she still looked very wan and pale, and each step appeared to be painful to her.

At last they came out of the lane and back into the road, and Truth pointed out the way the girl had to go, and told her to be strong and go forward, forgetting the things that were be-

hind; and Love and Hope followed her with their eyes; and so they separated, and Love and Truth and Hope were alone once more.

It was getting towards evening, and though not nearly as dark as in the lane, still the shadows were lengthening, and the sun sinking in the west. Presently they came to a field of long, beautiful, green grass. There was a little stream running through the middle of it, and trees on each side, and bright flowers, and in the field were many sheep and goats and little lambs feeding.

"Ah!" said Hope, "let us go in there. I want a little lamb to play with."

Now I saw that many of the sheep were brown, and some of the lambs black and white; but nearly all the goats were white, and their little kids were hardly recognisable from the lambs. So Hope ran into the field and raced after a little white kid. And behold! a goat, well armed with strong sharp horns, came straight down upon the child with all its force and knocked him into the brook. Now this was the second misfortune that had befallen Hope. Poor boy, he got out very wet and very much frightened, but was soon scampering away again after the little wild goats; and

though Truth called to him, he did not attend to her or come back. Then I saw that nearly all the goats were on one side of the little stream, and the sheep on the other; and walking through the field on the opposite side to Hope, among the sheep, I saw two figures—a man and a little boy. Almost at once I recognised them as Wisdom and Purity. Wisdom had a small white lamb in his arms; and an old brown sheep walked by the side of Purity, whose little hand rested upon its head. And as they walked through the pasture I saw that the sheep were in no way frightened at them, but only raised their heads and looked up, and never ran away; and many little lambs followed Purity, and some grave, quiet old sheep.

And Purity and Wisdom came through the field towards Truth. Then I remembered the boy Ignorance, and looked all round to see if I could find him also, but he was not there.

Then Wisdom and Love sat down together, and Truth and little Purity wandered through the grass among the sheep and lambs in the pleasant evening light. And by and by I saw Hope coming back across the field looking very crestfallen and tired, and he followed them at a distance with his head hanging down. The

little kids had run too fast, and led him quite out of the field, and over hedges, and into rough places, and the old goats had frightened and scratched him; but as he followed Truth I saw that the little lambs came up to him, and the old sheep walked slowly beside him and looked into his face; and by degrees he brightened up and smiled his old happy smile again.

Meanwhile Love and Wisdom sat and talked together, and I heard Love asking after Ignorance, "He left me," said her companion; "for as we sat in the wood, one came by with a grave and earnest countenance, and seeing the two boys he stopped and talked with me. He said that his name was Discipline, and that he was going on to join Experience, but that he could not bear to walk alone. As he spoke to the children his face grew so kind and gentle that I knew at once they would be in perfect safety with such a guide. So Ignorance took his hand and followed him through the wood, but Purity preferred to stay with me. And whether they have met Experience or not I cannot tell, but I know that all is well with the boy."

Now while Love and Wisdom were talking, and Truth and Hope and Purity walked together through the field, it grew darker and

darker. Whether I slept and woke, or whether I stopped dreaming and then dreamt again, I know not, but when next I saw them it was broad daylight. They were passing down a long straight road in the sunlight, with flowers and bright grass on each side. Truth and Love and Hope came first, the two sisters hand in hand, and Hope running joyously beside them, sometimes stopping to make little garlands of the flowers by the way. Wisdom and Purity followed some distance behind. But in front of Truth and Love I saw two figures; they had just entered the road by different paths, and now stood side by side. They held each other's hands, and as the sunlight fell upon their faces I saw that they looked joyously, cloudlessly happy. They walked on together, and as I gazed after them I thought "no road in life could be difficult to these two, if they might only walk it hand in hand."

By and by Truth and Love overtook and walked beside them, talking to each other, and yet unseen and unheard by the human forms at their side; and Hope ran on in front, and threw the flowers he had picked upon their pathway.

Truth called him to her, but he only ran

farther away, singing and laughing; it seemed as if his happiness was reflected on the forms that followed him, they looked into each other's eyes with such deep and radiant love, and as they pointed down the road to come, their hearts seemed full of gladness and unutterable content.

But I saw that Truth was grave and looked up often and sighed; Love's eyes filled with tears. "Sister, why do you not rejoice?" she said, "are you not glad to see two hearts in perfect happiness? Is there anything more beautiful to watch than two who go through life, finding all bright through love?"

But Truth said, "I sigh because they look *onward* and not *upward*, and I know that the road will soon divide them, and that one will walk alone; and because it is not well that Hope should run in front, for only when he lifts his eyes to heaven, or holds your hand and mine, is it good for mortals that he goes with them?" Then Love was silent.

And further on in the road there was a Gate, and by it stood an angel. But the human forms walked on, for to them it was invisible. Then I saw that one was young and beautiful; her calm, sweet face had no cloud or shadow

upon it, her eyes were bright with true eternal love, but she seemed wearied, and leant her head against her husband's shoulder, and he bent over her.

And now they were close to the Gate. The angel stood by their side, but to them he was invisible, only the radiance from his glittering wings fell upon her face, and made a glory round her head. But she grew white and faint; her husband would have carried her in his arms and tried to bear her on, looking up to heaven for help, but closer to her stood the angel. He took her in his arms, and as he raised his dazzling wings, she smiled. Then the Gate opened and the angel bore her through, and Hope who had come back followed by his side, and for one glorious moment the whole road was bathed in light. Then the Gate closed.

When I looked up again the whole road was different. It was still long and straight and level, but there were tall trees on each side and dark shadows, and the gleams of sunlight were few and far between.

And I saw the one figure who had been left alone after the Gate closed, and the joy went out of his life, walking sorrowfully onward. But by his side was Hope. I thought I had never

seen the child look so beautiful. His large eyes looked up to heaven, and his whole heart was in his eyes. He held his companion's hand, and with his little fingers pointed upwards, till the sorrowful eyes gleamed with joy, and for a moment grew bright like those of the little child-angel himself.

And Hope took out a little book and read to him; but as he read I saw that a terrible shadow (the shadow that I had seen before, near Hope when he was playing in the meadow) leant over the shoulder of Hope's companion, and continually whispered into his ear. They seemed to be fearful words, for a look of agony came over the listener's face, and it grew clouded and dark. Suddenly Hope looked up, and as he repeated aloud the holy words in his sweet childish voice, the shadow of Despair fled far away, and again a look of peace and rest came into his companion's sorrowful eyes, and Truth and Love who followed close to Hope said, "All will be well now; the dreary part of life will not be long to him, and (if he only could know it) he will be abundantly more joyful in the end than if there had been no separation, and they had walked on together in unclouded happiness."

Yet Love looked sorrowful, and as she leant upon her sister, I heard her say, "*Why* must mortals suffer so?"

"Because," said Truth, "they will not take us for their guides through life, they will not let us guard their hearts and souls, and keep them pure for the great King. He who is Love and Truth would have His children like Himself, and when they stray into wrong paths and follow false joys, and so go far from Him, He spares no single means to bind them to Himself. They suffer because His will is not their will, and their hearts are not His habitation, and wholly given to Him. But He would never have His children suffer hopelessly. He would have their whole hearts, that He may fill them with His love and joy; and therefore whatever clouds and darkens this, (however beautiful it in itself may be) He in His loving-kindness takes away. Only His children will not believe that He knows best, and that He loves them more than they love anything; if they could, they would be happy."

"If they could, they would be happy," I echoed. My dream vanished, but this thought remained. Oh is it possible to be happy always? Surely if God meant His children to

be so, He would have made life different. I believe that for a time we all must suffer, even as for a time God's world must rest in darkness. "Heaviness endures for a night," yet may not that "heaviness" even, teach us to rest in God? "Joy cometh in the morning."

The first gray gleam of dawn had come into my room, and I looked up. Oh, if our hearts would turn to meet God's light, how all their mists and sorrows would disperse!

We think we are alone with grief and pain, when Love and Truth and Hope are at our side, and only our own clouds of doubt and fear come between us and them.

It was the morning of Ascension Day now, for the night had passed. I thought of the disciples standing gazing up into heaven as a cloud received their Lord out of their sight. Clouds dim our eyes when we look up to heaven, clouds shadow all our hearts when we would pray, clouds of sorrow and suffering darken all human lives, but Faith believes through clouds, Love knows her Lord is near, though hidden from her eyes. Hope tells us that in heart and mind we too may ascend into the heavens, and with Him continually dwell; and through all the

pain and conflict, the mazes and difficulties of this life, we are promised a Guide and Comforter—even the Spirit of Truth, who shall abide with us for ever.

ALBRECHT MEISINGER.

ALBRECHT MEISINGER.

"They thirsted not when *He led them* through the deserts."

I AM an old man. The sixty years that I have had of life have left me tired, and my sixtieth birth-day finds me very lonely. My name is Albrecht Meisinger, and I live in Nüremberg, in an old house not far from where one whose Christian name I carry, lived in days gone past.

Shall I tell you what I *have*, what I have lost, and what I have learned in life? I am rich, and I am strong. Strange as it may seem, one can have a young and tired heart in an old and strong body? I have grey hair and a long white beard, but (and for this I ought to thank God) my eyes and ears see, and hear, and listen, and look for, much the same as they did in earlier days. I have all I need outwardly; for

I have a good home—good and kind relations share it with me. I have food, and clothing, and health. I have books, and I have money, and I have a little white kitten. She is lying by the fire while I write. And I have old thoughts that often come and visit me, and memory that haunts me, and in myself I have a heart which carries a great store of love that no one in this world has ever needed. Do not think I never loved. I did—but she whom I loved, God took. She died, but my love did not, and therefore I am now a solitary old man. And the great love that I have it in my heart to give to many, no one needs from me. (My little white cat, you have knocked the pen out of my hand. Must I stop, then, and stroke you? Do you mean that you love me, little thing? God bless you for it then. Ah, am I not an old fool to love thee so!)

Did I say I would write what I had lost? I have lost the hope of ever being loved as I could love.

When we are young we do not think about this. We believe it unconsciously. Infants are loved on all sides more than they can love. Children unconsciously live in an atmosphere of love. Youth hopes and doubts, and asks,

"Do you love me?" and seeks till it finds a reply.

God took the words out of her mouth who would have answered me.

That God was kind to her I cannot doubt—but to me?

It is a weary thing to walk through life willing to love, loving, but unloved. What have I said? Something that dimmed my eyes choked my heart also as I wrote, for that last word is not true.

I have friends. I wish I could love them as they love me, but I can't. They love me as they love their comrades (for most of them have many), next to their wives and children, with an open-hearted, true, cheerful affection that often touches me, for I know not why they love me, save that love is a part of the atmosphere of their natures, and that they feel that I love them. They do not *know* me; why should they want to? They would not miss me; why should I want them to? Ah me, but I do! Why must life be so lonely? Why is it that those who do not need receive, that those who hunger starve? But I write in bitterness. They are true healthy friends. I blame them not, but thank them from my heart. Only that heart is

alone, and hungers for one who would need from it that which it longs to give. For I love my friends, not because I distribute affection carelessly, but because I love *them*. Because I see in them that which is worthy of my love. Because, whether I will or not, once knowing them, I love with a strong, binding, changeless love, which even their changing could not change, and long for a little warm heart-fellowship from them.

I do not covet it. I know I have no right to it. Though we set bread before our guests, we reap our harvest for our wives and children. This is God's law, and it is right; and all are not as I am—hungry, because my harvest has been shared by none; poor, because none care to take of my riches, and make themselves rich; lonely, because God so has ruled my life that heart, and mind, and spirit live alone.

Love grows rich by giving, it is said. "It is more blessed to give than to receive." It is true, but half a truth.

Under the stars on a bitter night you might give your garments to one who was shivering, and the joy of giving might be greater than the pain of cold—yet you would die, and die of cold.

What have I learned in life? This—to expect nothing.

To plant seeds, and expect no flowers. To give and expect no thanks. Do not think I mean word-thanks (who gives, and looks for those is indeed poor), but that gleam of warm heart-brightening gratitude that sends reflected joy back to the giver, dear to him only because it proves that he has given joy.

I have learnt that it is easy to act in difficulty, to be brave in danger, compared to obeying that injunction (which to some is needed all their lives), "*Wait*, and be of good courage."

I have learned that one should not expect others to give what one's-self, being an exception, requires, and yet that God makes exceptions, and gives some of us needs that our lives (it appears always) can never satisfy.

I have learned that it is best to be very grateful, to make a very little go for much, as robins do who find half frozen crumbs, and sing on a winter's day.

I have learned that, to make others happy, we must give them what they like to receive, not what we like to give.

I have learned what suffering is, yet I under-

stand joy best. I could sympathise with it more. I know what it is.

Don't you think the little child, standing in the cold streets outside the baker's shop, can realise more vividly the joy of the child whose hunger is satisfied, than the sorrows of the little half-numbed children round him—and that the little luxurious lady (if she has a heart) is the most deeply touched by the half-starved faces in the street?

We understand that which we *need*, even more than that which we suffer. Suffering opens all our sympathies, especially those for joy.

I have learnt that experience is not a measure or weighing machine to test and weigh and judge each other by.

Truth, wisdom, and ready judgment are often turned aside and blinded by experience. You judge this one by what you have seen of another (whom Providence has thrown across your path, and with whom he has not the remotest connection), and you judge wrongly. I have found it so. Clear sight, truth and wisdom, will give you a fairer view of those natures or difficulties or troubles which come before you in life, than any consultation of your own experience.

Though we live to the age of Methuselah we cannot search our own experience for an explanation or definition of all that meets us in life, as though it were an infallible hand-book, or guide, or director.

If we do, we make many suffer through our misunderstandings or injustice—for natures are *not* alike.

God has given us each our own experience as a private lesson book, that we may each learn our lesson from it, and grow wiser, and therefore more helpful. Not a judgment book to judge others by, or a standard to measure, or a balance to weigh by, as so many seem to think.

Nor may we trust too much to the wisdom of age. Youth is often only more foolish than age, because it follows its follies more earnestly.

If indeed we might hoard up and gain fresh wisdom from day to day, keeping the eye clear, the heart pure, and the soul unspotted from the world, age would be wise; but the influence of life is, almost imperceptibly, to dim the sight, taint the heart, and cloud the mind; and oftentimes the wisdom of pure, wise, and humble youth (when this exists), is truer than the "wisdom and experience" of age. For the truest wisdom is not to be found in the world, though

we spend our years trying to glean it among life's stubble-fields, but is given to childlike hearts who desire to follow it. Those who seek wisdom *because they wish to obey it*, find it. Those who seek because they wish to *gain* it, only find the world's base counterfeit.

I, Albrecht Meisinger, have been a foolish old man. Would God this night I might become a wise and humble little child!

I am very tired, as I have said, of life. I may live for ten or twenty years more, but those years will bring me more weariness than joy, more pain than pleasure, more hunger than food; therefore, I cannot but look forward sorrowfully.

Alas! this is a lesson that life teaches us. A child only looks forward to joy; it does not understand looking forward to suffering, though when the suffering comes it cries. A child foresees no evil, but takes pain and joy, cloud and sunshine, as they come.

How can one then go back in one's old age, and become as a little child?

I know not.

. . . . . .

How the little children are playing in the room above!

They are my niece's little children. Sometimes they come and pay me a visit.

Little Gretchen will even steal in alone and sit on my knees for half an hour, while I tell her child-stories, and show her strange old pictures in my books. Yet I think she loves the kitten best; all her tender words go to it; and she does not know how I hunger for the love of her little child-heart.

My niece is kind and good, a loving mother and wife—what more can I say? and her children are the sunshine of the house, and I love them dearly.

It is a great blessing that our own love need never be restricted by the measure that we receive in return. No one can take away from another the joy of loving.

I do not think the children care for me, except perhaps little Gretchen. Nevertheless, I can but feel grateful to them, for they are a continual joy to me.

Yet it is a different thing to love the sunshine, from rejoicing in the sunlight; and at best, I am like one who sees from the window of his lonely room the sun shining, and the flowers blooming in the happy fields beyond.

My life is lonely. Only this very day I vowed

in bitterness, that I would rejoice no more in the sunlight of others.

"I will no more look for love and joy," I said, "where I only find pain and disappointment."

If I hunger and suffer, may God supply the need. In Him alone I will trust. My books shall be my companions and my interests. I will read, learn, and think, and I will teach my heart to care no more for any living thing.

For whenever I have loved I have been pained. When God took her away, who loved me as I loved, He left me with a great love unfulfilled. I bore it, for I could not doubt God's love, and by degrees I found that there were many left to love, though none as I loved her. I helped the sick, and made the poor happy. Some of them only cared for what I gave. Some of them cared for me—at least, for the ideal benefactor that they thought they saw in me; but it was with a warm half-adoring gratitude, that touched and surprised, but could not satisfy me. I was not what they thought; their love astonished me. I felt as though it was for some other person, and not for me. They did not *know* me, and could in no way love me for myself, for they looked up to me as a sort of

angel high above them, not a poor lonely man on an equality with them (at least) in suffering.

The little children understood me best, and loved me half-wonderingly, thinking of me as a kind old "Santa Claus," and yet half pitying me, bringing me often flowers and strawberries and little tame birds, "because," said they, "you live so much alone."

Children have quick sympathies and strange understandings or intuitions of that which is altogether different from themselves.

Then I found friends. Those whom I could, I helped, and I can never say how the love that they bestowed on me (though they had not often much to spare) helped me. Perhaps I looked too much for their love; but, ah me, when the sun shines, how can one help rejoicing in it when one is cold to the heart—how can one but miss it afterwards when the clouds come between? This year my best friend died.

I will love none, I said. I will live alone, and to God only will I look for love.

Then I laid my head down on my hands, and I do not think I either felt or thought. But as a mighty prisoner bursts his bands, so my soul would have rushed upward to the soul of her I love, leaving "this weary and most evil place,"

where we learn of "evil continually," are disappointed of good, and find—sorrow.

. . . . . .

As I lay crushed and wounded with pain, alone in the dead stillness of my room, a voice spoke, and to that voice I could but listen.

"Albrecht, I have loved thee. *I* do not change, though life changes; I do not cease to love, although thou lovest me not.

"Dost thou complain because men love thee not?

"Art thou lonely and sorrowful and weary of thy life? Listen, and I will tell thee how I lived for thee.

"No one has ever loved as I have loved, and yet in all my life I lived alone. They who most loved me left me in my need, and while they slept, I suffered for their sakes. I died for those who had forsaken me. I love in vain who love unboundedly. My voice calls through these eighteen hundred years, "Look back and know my love"—and few reply.

"I was lonely on earth. My very disciples knew me not. My brethren scorned me, my people crucified me—yet I loved. Day by day I stretch out my hands to a disobedient and gainsaying people.

"I see the evil that is in the world, as no human eye can see.

"I am forsaken, my love is forgotten, my sacrifice is trampled under foot—yet I love.

"To my children I make 'all things work together for good.'

"Though they walk in my footsteps, they do not walk alone.

"I lead them in the way I went before, because I would have them for ever like myself. They drink my cup of suffering that hereafter they may drink my joy.

"As my love is greater than theirs, so was my suffering greater than theirs can ever be. I bore all pain, tasted all suffering, and knew all grief *for them.* Yet they murmur when for a time they bear a little pain, a little suffering, a little grief *with me.*

"Dost thou complain because life wearies thee? I murmured not.

"Canst thou not trust my love?

"Dost thou murmur because thou art not loved? *I* loved without return, and I love thee.

"Dost thou seek death because thy life is lonely?

"Canst thou not *live* for me?

"Doing my work, life will not weary thee; loving as I loved, life will not be lonely. Love me as I love thee, and thou will not hunger so for human love." . . . . So the voice ceased, and when I looked up the room was silent. My great books stood on the table, but I did not turn to them for help and comfort now. The sun shone in at my little window, a better sun shone through and through my heart, yet a deeper sorrow than I had ever felt for my own loneliness, filled my soul.

"I have been ungrateful," I said. "I have not loved as my Master loved. I have not followed in His footsteps. I have forsaken Him. I have murmured and rebelled. God pardon me."

And so I fell on my knees and wept like a little child.

More and more as I thought of His love, the riddle of my life grew plain to me. My own cross grew light. I had thought myself strong, yet when He called me to follow in His footsteps I had turned weak and rebelled.

I had thought myself able to suffer and bear great things, yet when He gave me a little of that to bear which He had borne before, I

thought that He had forsaken me, and cried out in my despair.

I thought I could bear suffering and pain and persecution. I found I could not bear loneliness, weariness, and want of love, for Him. I had sought for human love, and I had *not* loved Him.

From that time life was a different life to me, and even now I feel like Peter, who, sleeping in his prison, was roused by the voice of an angel, and knew not whether he yet dreamed or walked at liberty.

For if I look into myself I am still a lonely old man, and if I look through my own heart at life, it is still desolate and very wearying, but through that greater Love all life is glorified. I will love on; my friends, whether they return me love or not; my little children, who perhaps are nearer heaven than I am. Yes, even thou, my little white cat, who teachest me that even Nature's law is love.

And I will remember that God's love supplies all needs, and that the greatest *want* of all is want of love to Him, and trust Him with my life, and for all human love.

> "He satisfieth the longing soul,
> And filleth the hungry soul with goodness."

THOUGHTS ON SORROW AND ITS TEMPTATIONS.

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"Ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy."

So much has been said and written about the temptations of joy to a Christian, and the dangers of earthly happiness, that I should like to turn for a while to the other side and consider the temptations of sorrow to a Christian.

Earthly happiness, it is said, and truly, draws the heart from God. When we have all we wish on earth, it is hard indeed not to be content, not to rest, first, in thankful satisfaction, then in forgetful satisfaction; not to look upon this life as the fulfilment of our hopes, desires, and wishes.

The temptation of earthly happiness is to be content with little things, and so forget the

greatest and highest good. In the enjoyment of the pottage, Esau-like, we lose our birthright.

What constitutes sorrow is, in general, the loss of our earthly happiness, or the loss of that which tended most to make life happy to us.

And speaking of joy and sorrow, the very first thought that must strike through our hearts is this—Is it not possible to keep and hold through life a deep and living joy that cannot be taken away—a happiness that cannot turn to sorrow, because we cannot lose that which is its spring?

To this question the Christian must answer, Yes; yet how few Christians live as if this truth was a reality to them.

Many Christians walk through life, showing clearly that their citizenship is in heaven, breathing the air of heaven, walking in heaven's sunshine, guarded and protected from the glare and defilement of the world.

Many Christians look through the mists and enjoyments and snares of this life and are not blinded or dazzled or entrapped by them; they estimate and judge them according to God's standard of judgment, and look forward with pure eyes to the things that are real and

eternal; in a word, they esteem things in proportion as they are of the nature of God.

Yet when the time comes that this soul-faith of theirs must be tried, how miserably they fail sometimes. It is a hard thing to say, but how few of those who find religion a safeguard in prosperity, find it also a comfort in sorrow. I mean a *real* comfort. God knows there are many who put their faith into life, and who live and walk by it; yet how few there are who, when all joys in life fail them, can yet feel the joys of God to be *more real*, more comforting, more true than those they have lost.

The religion of God is as much a healer of sorrow as it is a foe to sin. There must be both in this world, because we are imperfect and unable to live in purity, which alone is peace. Therefore, since the transgression of Adam, sin and sorrow have wandered over this earth, hand in hand.

This is the dark side of a truth we cannot turn our eyes from.

Hear the other side—the side which is the Christian's joy and light, which is the very life by which he lives.

From sin there is a redemption, from the dominion of sin an unlimited, eternal release.

For *all* sorrow there is infinite comfort. For the bitterest of all sorrow, that sorrow which is especially and wholly the fruit and result of sin—remorse, there is a full and perfect cure, forgiveness that takes away the sin, divine peace which fills the soul too perfectly to admit of any bitter memory of that which is no longer there.

"And yet," it might be said, "are there not sufferings which no amount of faith and love to God, can keep from being sufferings? For instance, ill health, loss of what we love, death that takes away from us those we love? . . . Yes, there are; no amount of individual faith and love to God, will make life, even to the strongest Christian, free from suffering. But this is true—all the consolations, all the help, all the revelations of peace and truth, all the opposites and antidotes of sorrow and suffering, come from God.

All sin, with its results of sorrow and suffering, is from the evil one, whose yoke we took upon ourselves when Adam fell.

And as God is greater than the evil one, as the power of good is stronger than evil, so are all God's gifts unspeakably greater than all man's needs. For every great sorrow God has

a great and surpassing comfort, which, had we not needed, we should have never known. For every need of man God has a Divine supply.

If we could but believe this!

If we could but leave off laying sin, with its results of sorrow and suffering, at God's door, as it were.

If we could think of God as the Father and the Saviour, not the Lawgiver and the Judge; as the Healer and not the Afflicter, as the Giver of all life and goodness and joy, not the Sender of Death, of punishments and of judgments; I think, then, we could rejoice in God, alike in happiness and in adversity, more than we do.

What does all revelation teach us of God? That He is Love, that His glory is in man's salvation, and that His delight is in man's welfare, and that "He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men."

Now, it is the knowledge of God that brings comfort in sorrow; without it life would be one great sorrow. The keenest sorrows of life come from mistaken views of God.

To know God must be joy—when we know Him perfectly, we shall be perfectly joyful. But we can only know Him perfectly, when we

are like Him, when *we* are perfected. Meantime, the more we know of Him, the more comfort and joy we shall receive, for in Him and Him alone is the comfort for every sorrow, the supply for every need.

Now, it is a terrible thing, but a true one, that when a Christian says he has "no comfort but in God," it often means that he has no comfort at all, or but the veriest shadow and ghost of one, not strong enough to make him comfortable. The comfort that God gives must be greater than any other, or rather, the truths that God gives us to comfort us must be more real than all else.

Yet, when we need them most, and have nothing else, how little we realise them.

If it were not so we should find an answer in God to every sorrow and every need of man.

It is want of faith, want of trust in God, that causes a Christian to be swallowed up and wholly engrossed in overmuch sorrow. I am not speaking now of sorrow for sin (though I believe it would be true of that also), but of sorrow caused by any trial, affliction, or bereavement.

Is it Death that has taken all your joy in life away from you, and left you with a sorrow on

heart, and soul and mind, growing heavier each day, and which no human power can raise, or lighten, or heal? Look to God—your most intense love was not too great for Him to understand, for He loves more than you can ever love. He does sympathise—He can help and heal.

But to Christians it should not be possible that death could take away "all their joy in life." The greatest joy in life should be to walk with God, doing and loving His will, and having Him always, who can never be taken away. If we put our hearts and souls too much into the things God gives us for a time, we shall indeed be wounded more than He would have us, when He takes these gifts away.

There is but one thing He has promised His children at all times and for ever, and that is Himself. In love for us, He tells us to love that most which can never be taken away from us, which is also beyond all calculation, most worthy of our love. And if, in the place of Him, we put that which is His creature and His gift to us for a time, it is indeed well for us that it is taken away. It is not a punishment of God, it is but that He takes us by the hand, and leads us to a higher good.

Why should we look back and resist Him, and, in our fearful want of Faith, question His love to us? Only by loving God, truly and intensely, as He would have us, can we love our fellow-men with the depth and strength of love none but the Christian knows.

Love to God does not make us less sensible to sorrow. But it *does* comfort, and the realization of the love of God is the only thing that makes up for (and this ought to be a weak expression), the loss of human love.

After all, God alone knows what sorrow death can bring. God alone can comfort, and the comfort would be greater than the sorrow if we had but sufficient faith. Above all, death should never seem to us *cruel*, being to the Christian the gate of life, opened to him at the right time exactly, and no other, and should never be a surprise (save perhaps in the first shock), being the law of our mortal life.

The temptations of sorrow are not altogether unlike the temptations of prosperity. If it is difficult in joy and happiness to walk by faith, it is also difficult in sorrow and trial, and needs, I believe, a greater faith.

For resignation is not faith, nor is submission even, a sign of strong faith in God. It shows,

indeed, an acknowledgment of His authority, and a refusal to rebel against His will, but is this the only faith a Christian should have in the God who loves him, as He loved His Son? This is, indeed, but a little faith,—a faith of the letter it may be, but not of the spirit. Faith in God should be stronger and more real than the strongest faith that could ever go forth from one human heart to its truest human friend.

Faith in God is not the believing of His words alone, still less is it the belief of His authority,—it is belief in Him. It is the sure and certain trust that what He does is well, not because He is a sovereign, but because He loves us, more truly even than the love of any human soul can teach us to conceive. It does not show much faith in a friend to believe that what he says is the truth—to trust in him, when in all things he does only what we wish; but who that knows what a true friendship is, does not trust and believe in his friend, above and beyond all his words, without even the wish or expectation of having all his actions explained and made clear to him?

Yet our trust in a friend may be misplaced; our trust in God never can be. It is a poor faith that we give Him who is more true to

us, more tender, more loving than our truest human friend. Oh, shame on our weak faith that it will bear this comparison! Faith in God should be faith that *does* bring comfort in sorrow, not resignation alone.

I believe I am right in saying, a Christian should never yield himself up wholly to sorrow. It is a dishonour to his faith. Can any loss or trial take from him the God of all consolations, Christ the Prince of Peace, the Holy Ghost, the Comforter?

Satan would fain make both our sorrows and joys, weights to hinder us from glorifying God, instead of tests for our faith, and conflicts wherein faith should have the victory.

Many a Christian will bring God into his sorrow, but few will take their sorrows to God, and *leaving them with Him*, receive His peace and comfort.

God Himself will come and comfort and inhabit the sorrowful soul, whose hope is in His love. But God would have our whole heart, and we are apt to keep a part of what should be His temple, sacred to our sorrow.

Unconsciously, it may be, our grief becomes our idol, which we are unwilling to dethrone that God may reign supreme. We let the cold image

of our sorrow stand in the sacred place, and will not open its door to the living, loving Spirit of God.

Yet Satan says, "You are resigned, you are submissive, all is well," and we believe that we are glorifying God in our affliction. Is it so? Oh, in the sorrows and sufferings of this life, and God knows that they are many and intense, there is nothing for us but to turn our eyes away from them to God (as the bitten Israelite to the brazen serpent), no rest for our wounded hearts but in the love of our Father.

That trial which makes us doubt the love of God is indeed a fiery one; but recognise this in itself as a temptation of the devil, and God will give you power to overcome it.

Learn not to question.

Learn to love and wait and be faithful through all suffering, through all temptation, through all sorrow, and do not think that you will not be rewarded.

I believe all suffering, borne as God would have His children bear it, strengthens our power of joy, increases our peace, deepens our knowledge of God afterwards. "No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, *afterward* it yieldeth the

peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby, *Wherefore*, lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees."

I think there are times in the lives of all Christians when they have to pass through seasons of pure suffering, sometimes even without the *realisation* of the presence of God.

Why this is allowed we know not, but we do know that God is faithful, that He will not allow us to be tempted above that which we can bear—that He is never far from His people, but nearer if possible, in their hour of greatest need—that He makes all things work together for good, even the terrible mystery of suffering; for is it not written of Christ Himself, that He was made "perfect through suffering," and "the disciple is not above his Master, nor the servant above his lord?"

"Fear none of those things that thou shalt suffer." These are the words of the risen Christ to His suffering Church on earth, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

And for those who are suffering now and need present help, and the promise of future

rest, I know no more blessed word than this—

"The God of all grace, who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. To Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever." Amen.

A SUNDAY EVENING'S WALK.

A SUNDAY EVENING'S WALK.

EVENING church was over, and I walked through the fields alone towards home. There is something especially beautiful and soothing in the evening service, I think. The words of that collect, "Give unto us, Thy servants, that peace which the world cannot give," sinks always like balm into my heart; yet as I walked slowly on, I was only conscious of feeling more tired than I had been two hours before, and no whit happier.

The words of the hymn they had sung in church haunted me.

> "My God, my Father, while I stray
> Far from my home, on life's rough way,
> Oh teach me from my heart to say
> Thy will be done.
>
> . . . . .

> "Renew my will from day to day,
> Blend it with Thine, and take away
> All that now makes it hard to say,
> Thy will be done."

My heart had gone with those words; for truly I believe that God's will is indeed the one true happy perfect thing, and that obedience to it—I mean, a living, willing obedience—is the one thing needful. Nevertheless, the wish to do God's will does not keep life from being hard, sorrowful, wearying, and perplexing to each and all of us at times. So I thought, as I walked along, and bent my head down sorrowfully. My feet sank in the long warm grass, and a whole troop of golden buttercups smiled up at me. Each little golden cup threw back the sunlight, and in them there seemed no echo to the question rising in my heart, "Why does God allow our life to be such as it is? Why is it so full of sorrow?" Among the buttercups were large, deep crimson clover-heads. I could not help stopping to pick one. Then a little to one side I saw some orchises, white, and pale purple, and speckled lilac, and I bent down and looked at them all, and picked some, and walked on thinking about them; and then I stumbled against a heap of old stones with fossils in them. These have always an especial charm for me,

and so for a time I forgot my meditations upon life, though my question remained unanswered.

Yet it struck me that something in my thoughts was wrong. The very beauty of the little flowers at my feet, the heap of broken stones holding out to me, as it were, a page of the picture-book of the world's childhood, spoke of the loving-kindness and wisdom of the God who had put them there. Why were these flowers in the fields? The gleaming buttercups answered me, "Because God loves us and gives us innumerable small tokens of His love, that we may know that He would have His children happy. He has not made this earth a "barren and dry land." He would not have us find it so. But why then *do* we find it so? I thought. Why, then, are there times—and, oh, they seem long and wearying!—when life is barren of joy, and the constant, daily, tiring trouble and pain overweighs all small happiness?

I suppose we have to learn that endurance and patience and hope are needed daily, that our faith must leaven our whole life, and not only be called out to bear some great calamity. We need God's sunshine to brighten us in weariness, depression, and heaviness, even as we need

His grace to strengthen us to bear trouble and trial and pain.

Going out of church tired and down-hearted, it seemed to me that the buttercups preached me a second sermon; for they said, "Look up, open your heart to take in God's sunshine which is shining all around; for to reflect it always even in life's gloomiest hours, this is truly to do the will of God."

THE PHILOSOPHY OF SORROW.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF SORROW.

"Tribulation worketh Patience; and Patience, Experience; and Experience, HOPE."

I THINK if some of us had written the fruits or effects of "tribulation," we should have ended them with "fear," not "hope."

It seems as if hope was the last thing that could be taught us by the pain we each of us have to suffer some time or other in life. Some people say that it is the nature of youth to be hopeful, but I do not think so.

It is in the nature of youth to "figurer," to look on into the future, and build castles in the air, and see things in bright colours; but, for this very reason, it is also in the nature of youth to suffer more or less keenly when these illusions are dispelled. Now hope does not mean

expecting bright things in life, and picturing eternal summer-time; that would be an easy task, especially to a happy soul, in the spring-time of life. Hope, if it is worthy of its name, is a power that enables us to wait quietly and patiently, yes, and even *cheerfully*, through the very darkest and most wintry hours of life, looking for and believing in a good which we cannot see.

If we want true, patient, hopeful endurance of the trials of life, where do we find it most—in youth or age?

Not in youth, I believe.

The hopefulness of youth is very like the seed that sprung up by the wayside, and was sown on stony ground. The first trial of life, the first real *need* of hope, shows us that the plant had really never taken root, and was so short-lived, that we are utterly unable to bear up. Youth has to *learn* to hope, and how? It seems a strange discipline, but it is true—by seeing its own hopes fall, and learning to accept the unexpected good God sends in His own way, by suffering and finding out that it *can* suffer, by enduring and finding out that sorrow passes—passes and leaves not wounds only, but blessings.

If youth only knew how patiently middle-age carries its burdens! And this is not, I believe, because its burdens are lighter, (for how can that be?) nor always because it has a firmer trust in God, but because life has taught it the philosophy of sorrow. It can look back and count the wounds that time has healed. It can see how its own mistakes, the sufferings brought through life by the mistakes of others, have turned to good account. It remembers how the darkest clouds have passed, and sunshine come between. It knows now, by experience, what we cannot believe in youth, that sorrow *does* pass away. It is not fleet-winged like joy, but it does not take up its abode and dwell with us for life, though in our first despair we think that it is so.

Experience teaches hope. Oh, well for us that this is a divine truth!

I believe our keenest sufferings often come to us in youth. Perhaps it is that, through experience, we may learn our lesson of hope early, before the harder trials of life (which otherwise would wholly crush us) come. When they do come, I believe they are more endurable, because we have learnt to endure.

"The heart knoweth its own bitterness." We

are always alone in our very deepest pain, but learning to bear pain bravely does lessen its power over us; learning to hope through suffering does help to drive it away.

In youth we idealise suffering, and therefore do not bravely strive to raise ourselves out of grief; afterwards we learn that patient, hopeful endurance of trial, and belief in joy to come, is the true heroism.

We suffer more than God means us to suffer (if that does not sound irreverent), but, after all, no suffering is lost; it teaches us sympathy, it binds us by cords of love to those who would heal our griefs, (and what sympathy age has for youth!); it leads us step by step up that ladder, whose basis is *experience*, and its summit the most joy-giving of all Christian virtues—HOPE.

REGRET.

REGRET.

Is it a rule that all our past pleasures turn into sorrows, every happiness gone by into a present grief, all our lost joys into pain? Is it human nature that the memory of the lost things we have loved should bring a sadness deeper than the joy they gave? Is there any cure for regret?

"I will answer these questions," I said to myself, but I could not. If the power was given us to root out of our hearts the deepest-seated regret, would we do so? I believe not. What one has ceased to love, one ceases to regret; for regret is not memory—it is not a looking over the past; it is the crying out of our nature for a thing we miss in the present. When we cease to miss what we have lost, we cease to regret it;

but we do not cease to miss a thing that we have loved, *until* we cease to love it. Love is the strength of regret, and regret is a creeper that we cannot cut out of our hearts, because it twines itself around the strongest affections there. We do not recognise it as a sorrow, but truly it is one of the most real, I will not say the greatest, of all human pains.

We cannot bear to feel that we have *lost* something—that it is quite, quite gone from us, never to return again. We cannot bear to realise that we who went out full are brought home again *empty*. We strive to hold the joys that are ours no more, drawing them back by chains of love, of longing and desire. We, in our hearts, cleave to the memory of what is gone. We *ask* it to remain with us, we pine for the ghost Remembrance.

With our own hands we nurture the plant Regret; and when it has filled our hearts, are they at rest?

Oh, human hearts, are not your ways unequal? I think the angels who watch us must mourn, not so much over our sufferings (for they see how all things work together for good), but over our incapacity for joy, our faithless turning

away from sunshine, our self-made tortures, that we will not *desire* to heal.

"Why are ye troubled?" said Christ; and when He left His disciples there was much to trouble them. They did not understand that He left them to send them another Comforter, and that their greatest loss should bring them sevenfold joy. God never takes away a single thing except to give us back a better gift. He doth not afflict willingly. He loves us more than *we* can love. It must grieve Him when we turn our eyes away from His comfort and fix them on the thing He takes away. We have all to suffer. Some of us suffer by never having what we desire; others, by holding it for a time, and then seeing it pass out of their life, and some of us by seeing what we love most, suffering. God *appoints* us suffering. Even the keenest thorns of that self-woven crown Regret are known by Him, are all made to work into the fabric of our life, and fit us for His will—but *God gives us joy.* That is the divine gift, the angel that helps to heal heart-wounds as well as grief of soul and mind, the one heavenly Sunbeam that banishes Regret.

FAITH.

FAITH.

"HAVE faith in God."

What a different world this would be if we had but faith! Yes, if even all those who are Christians had real faith. I do not mean faith only so far as concerns the saving of their souls through the blood and work of Christ, but faith such as Christ displayed and taught, in God's power and love—in a word, if we had but "faith in God."

What is faith? Is it only to believe that Christ died for your sins, and rose again for your justification? Is it only to believe that God has pardoned you, and that you are His child, living to do His work on earth, and to be received at last into His "many mansions?" This is a glorious faith; hold it to your life's

end, and may God prosper and increase it abundantly; but, O Christian, it is but a little faith. Peter, who believed that Christ was the Son of God, yet wondered that the fig-tree which He cursed was withered away. In his heart he was surprised that our Lord's words had come true.

With our souls we believe, with our lips we confess Christ's divinity. Still in our hearts we doubt His power to save. We wonder when our prayers are answered, according to His promise; we are astonished when His judgments descend, according to His Word! We have need, with Peter, to let our Lord's words sink into our souls.

"Have faith in God."

Christ expects to find faith in His disciples. When He was asleep on the pillow, and the storm arose, and the disciples came, saying, "Master, save us, we perish," He answered them, "How is it that ye have no faith?" We think it faith to pray to God in our peril. Christ calls it faith to be confident and calm in the greatest danger. He would have us *fearless* when we are doing His will.

When Peter came to Jesus at the Lord's bidding, walking upon the water, he saw the wind boisterous and was afraid; he began to

sink, and cried to Christ, "Lord, save me." Hear Christ's words, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" And yet we should have called it strong faith to come to Christ on the water, very natural to be fearful. It is not a mere faith in doctrines that He expects from us, or a faith in words only, it is a faith in Himself. In Him as a person, in His Father as one who is our Father, with whom all things are possible; who answers prayer, not for spiritual things alone, but in bodily want; who is as ready to give us what we ask, as He was to give to Christ, if only we had Christ's faith.

Leaving "the principles of the doctrines of Christ, let us go on unto perfection." Let us not grieve our Lord, and hear His words reproaching us continually—"O ye of little faith!" "O fools and slow of heart to believe!" "O faithless generation!"—when we might be strong in faith, giving glory to God. Remember our faith is to show itself in common earthly things, not only in spiritual things. Think of the test of Abraham's faith; Christ would have our faith no less than Abraham's. He meant it to be as great. Abraham "against hope believed in hope," yet we think it much faith to believe a

simple promise. Christ would have us exercise faith concerning clothing, concerning food, concerning money. It is after He had been teaching the disciples how God feeds the ravens and clothes the grass of the field, that He adds, "How much more you, O ye of little faith." He would have us feel strong faith in those matters. We trust Him with our souls, with great eternal things. Is He not worthy to be trusted also with our bodies, with the little temporal things?

If we find a servant faithful in little things, then we believe that he will be so also in great things; but with our God, whom we trust for all great things, we have no faith to believe that He will also care for us in little things. We have a far-off faith, but no close, perfect trust.

Has the world changed since the days of the apostles, and has the word of the Lord changed? or has our faith changed? Is there faith on the earth?

There is belief, I know; but is there faith? Oh, Son of God, before thou comest send thy faith into our hearts?

"Lord, increase our faith." May we trust thee with body, soul, and spirit, for the things temporal as well as the things eternal!

Oh, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, give us their faith!

Thou who forgavest the doubting disciples, forgive and strengthen us.

We have been earnest in our prayers for faith; we will believe that thou wilt give it to us, and wilt make us all that thou wouldst have us to be, if we have faith in God.

HOPE.

"Hope maketh not ashamed."

WE cannot hope too much in God for good things. We may expect too much of each other, and be disappointed; with God, the strange thing is that we expect too little.

We have not, because we ask not; and we ask not, because we do not believe how ready He is to give us *abundantly* all good.

Our hope in Him cannot be disappointed, though it may have to wait long. Solomon said, "Hope deferred maketh the heart sick." A greater than Solomon knew of a hope that is as "an anchor to the soul, both sure and steadfast; that, though "not seen" ("for what a man seeth, why doth he therefore hope for?") is yet a rest, and life, and strength to the soul.

We cannot hope too much in God's great love to us—I mean, we cannot think it greater than it is.

And we cannot hope in His mercy too much, if only we go to Him through the right way.

And we cannot hope too much for answers to our prayers, only in hoping we must always remember that the answers will be according to His will.

We *have* a faith in God, but it is a narrow one. We have a hope in God, but it is a feeble one. Oh, if we expected more, we should find more! Is it so difficult to trust the God who loves us so?

We can trust a friend, once we feel we are loved; we have unbounded faith and hope sometimes in a human soul, yet we may be disappointed ourselves, or even disappoint and be cast off; but in God our faith and hope ought to be limitless, and will always be unutterably rewarded.

Jeremiah said, "My strength and my hope is perished from the Lord," but that was in a faithless moment; for two verses further on we read, "This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope." And again, "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in Him."

And it is not a natural thing to hope for that which we see not. We are apt not to hope much in each other for the good that we do not see. If we have to wait a long time for any mark or proof of affection in one who, we know, loves us, we are very ready to give up hoping or believing in that love. Very seldom, even if we know that it is there, can we "in patience wait for it."

And hope in heavenly things is a divine gift, not a natural characteristic.

We can all hope by fits and starts, and hope restlessly, when we catch glimpses of the thing hoped for; but this is not "a sure and certain hope."

Our hope should be a reality, bringing joy and continual peace. Sight is only a comfort in sunny days, faith may become feeble in the midst of temptations, but hope looks on into the future, and rejoicing says, "All is well."

Hope is like the dove that brought to Noah the symbol of peace, by which he knew that the waters were abating. And hope triumphs in tribulation, and should grow stronger in difficulty.

"We glory," says the apostle, "in tribulations also; knowing that tribulation worketh

patience; and patience, experience; and experience, *Hope; and Hope maketh not ashamed.*"

May He who is the God of hope give unto us the increase of faith, hope, and charity; that we may be His true children, and that for evermore our faith and hope may be in God.

IN PAIN.

"In my distress I cried unto the Lord, and He heard me."

IN PAIN.

I.

"When my heart is vexed I will complain."
"Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee, O Lord!"

THROUGH painfulness and weariness
  Of heart, and mind, and brain,
Through days of grief and dreariness,
  And hours of ceaseless pain.

In deep and desolate distress,
  With none to comfort me,
Father, Whom I would praise and bless,
  Why art Thou hard to me?

I would not shirk the keenest pain
  Could I but see Thy hand,

I would take up each cross again
  Were it at Thy command;
But must all hope of rest be vain
  Save in that better land?

Redeemer! Thou Whose sinless head
  Was crowned in mockery;
These thorns pierce inward through my head,
  Wilt Thou not pity me?
Though all, save Thee, condemn and blame,
  Redeemer, take my part,
Hide Thou my misery and shame,
  Heal Thou my wounded heart.

Thou Who hast called me for Thine own
  Wilt Thou not succour me?
None ever walked the fire *alone*
  With fervent trust in Thee.
The bruised reed Thou wilt not break,
  Thou blessest those that weep;
Oh, for Thy loving-kindness sake,
  My worn-out nature keep.

Why must I bear this bitter cross?
  Thou hast not made me strong,
I count no yielded joy a loss
  That in thy sight was wrong.

I give my mind and will to Thee,
  I cast my heart on Thine,
Wilt Thou not help and strengthen me
  Out of Thy love divine?

An angel watched in Olivet
  To strengthen Christ in prayer;
No heavenly messenger I get
  Who also wrestle there,
And feel the burden on me set
  More than my flesh can bear.

Thou upon Whom my sins are cast,
  Christ the eternal Son,
I also, until life is past,
  Will say, "Thy will be done."
Be Thou my Comforter at last,
  For upon earth is none.

"He maketh sore, and bindeth up;
  He woundeth, and His hands make whole."

II.

"I cry in the day time, but Thou hearest not, and in the night season, and am not silent."

THOU shalt not vanish from my sight
  And bear all hope and peace from me;

Nay, I will hold Thee fast to-night;
  Listen, for I must plead with Thee.

Have I not loved Thee, O my Lord,
  With all the love Thou gav'st to me?
Have I not trusted in Thy word
  Through days of joy and misery?

Why must I drink this cup of pain,
  This fiery pain that tortures me;
Surely it cannot be in vain
  That Thou dost scourge and chasten me?

Oh, I have trusted in Thy word,
  And to my heart Thy ways were sweet,
And shall I serve Thee better, Lord,
  Now that I walk with bleeding feet?

Faith fails, hope falters, only love
  Holds Thee, and will not let Thee go.
Oh, Saviour, hear me from above,
  And in Thy mercy heal my woe.

"My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever."

III.

I HEARD a voice from far away
  As I lay dull and sad,
For very grief I could not pray
  To Him Who makes us glad;
Yet like the words a friend might say
  It stilled the pain I had.

"He who has balm for all our pain
  Knows every grief of ours,
We shall not cry to Him in vain
  In life's most lonely hours;
Oh, doubting hearts, look up again,
  He will revive your powers.

"We, when our earthly joys depart,
  Turn from His love divine,
And let each vain regretful smart
  Around our souls entwine;
Oh, child, the God who knows each heart
  Could heal this pain of thine!

"We weep o'er ev'ry vanished thing,
  We call the winter long;
'Tis but the hush before the spring
  When all things wake in song;
And we too shall rejoice and sing
  Who now have mourned so long."

The tears no longer dimmed my eyes,
  I was no more oppressed.
"Strong in God's strength I will arise
  And look to Him for rest;
Touched with the light of paradise,
  Life's darkest hours are blest."

IV.

THE twilight falls in sadness,
  And as I lie alone,
It seems as though hope and gladness
  Out of my life had flown.

And pain and depression only
  Are clouding this heart of mine;
Christ, I am tired and lonely,
  Grant me Thy peace divine.

Closer the shadows gather,
  The night grows dark round me,
But I hear the voice of my Father
  Calling and calling me.

Though darkness and pain and sorrow
  Cloud and encompass me;
Joy comes with the coming morrow,
  In the night "I am still with Thee."

V.

"Hear me speedily, Lord; my spirit faileth."

"As the hart pants for cooling streams,"
  So pants my soul for rest,
Oh, Christ, bend down and answer me,
  For, wearied and opprest,
All my exhausted nature seems
  To call to Thee for rest.

As captives pine for liberty,
  As infants cry for sleep,
As spirits numbed with misery
  Long for the power to weep;
As suppliants yearn for purity
  After their sins confessed,
So cries my longing heart to Thee,
  "Lord Jesus, give me rest."

VII. SLEEP.

Oh, happy, happy sleep!
  Rest, aching head,
Poor eyes that may not weep,
  Sad heart that long hath bled,
Strange thoughts for words too deep.

Rest, soul, in peace that heav'n hath o'er thee
shed,
From calm white wings of angels overhead;
Rest in the sorrow-healing, silent night,
Rest in the depths of goodness infinite.

Like music to the wearied, mournful heart,
Like living waters to the thirsty soul,
Like happy smiles ere happy lovers part,
Like the long rest, without the funeral toll.
God's gift to sinless man, God's balm for eyes
that weep;
Thou who dost love thine own, give thy beloved
sleep!

"Thou holdest mine eyes waking."
"He giveth His beloved sleep."
"I will give you rest."

VII.

"At evening time it shall be light."

LIKE the voice of a friend when grieving,
Like peace after weary pain,
Came the smile of the sweet spring evening,
After the snow and rain.

The lambs are leaping and springing,
  And above from the elm tree
Comes the voice of the blackbird singing
  His exquisite melody.

Also for me is past
  The morning of rain and snow;
And sunbeams shall bless at last
  The way that my feet must go.

"IN WEARINESS AND PAINFULNESS."

LEAD me, lead me, Jesus,
  With Thy loving hand;
Though the way be dreary,
  To the longed-for land,
I shall not be weary
  Following Thy command.

Teach me, teach me, Jesus,
  I would learn of Thee;
Though the shadows lengthen,
  And no light I see,
Thou my faith shalt strengthen,
  For I lean on Thee.

Heal me, heal me, Jesus,
  I am tired and sad;

Life is wearying, Jesus,
  Thou canst make me glad;
And I mourn not, Jesus,
  For the joys I had.

Take, oh take me, Jesus,
  For with Thee is rest;
Here I toil and suffer,
  Wearied and oppressed;
Take, oh take me, Jesus—
  Yet Thy will is best.

"Oh, that I had wings like a dove!
  For then would I fly away and be at rest."

FLESH AND SPIRIT.

Infinite love
Upholds and strengthens me from day to day,
Infinite good enfolds me when I pray,
Infinite blessings wait around my way—
Why do I not rejoice?

Day by day
Pain and depression wear my strength away;
When I would praise Thee, I am dumb with pain,
For suffering weighs on soul, and heart, and brain—
Thou who canst strengthen me and make me whole,
Let Thy deep peace sink down into my soul;
Let every throb of pain cry unto Thee,
"Although I suffer, Lord, I trust in Thee."

Infinite joy
Shall fill my heart and mind one far-off day;
Infinite bliss
Shall meet me in that region far away;
Infinite praise
Shall fill these lips, which now no word can say.

A RETROSPECT.

A RETROSPECT.

I WOULD look back upon my life to-night,
  Whose years have scarcely numbered twenty-
    two;
I would recall the darkness and the light,
  The hours of pain God's angels led me through;
Out of His love He orders all things right,
  I, slow of heart, would feel that this is true.

I, in those years, have learnt that life is sad,
  Sad to heart-breaking did we walk alone.
I, who have lost much which I never had,
  Yet which in ignorance I held mine own,
Would leave that clouded past, its good and bad,
  Within His hands to whom all things are
    known.

We cannot read our own experience right,
  For God in love has hidden it from our eyes,
Lest we should doubt His goodness infinite,
  When all our countless faults before us rise.
To him who seeks to serve his God aright
  All steps in life lead on towards paradise.

There is a voice in weariness and pain
  That tells us where alone we find our rest;
There is in every loss a present gain,
  If it but draw us closer to His breast.
And truly if all ways of life were plain,
  Where were the trust that says, "He knoweth best?"

Oh, I have learnt that faith, however true,
  Fails often in our times of sorest need;
Like to St Peter, when the tempest blew,
  We need Christ's hand, or we should sink indeed.
Yet are our darkest hours made short and few,
  Because He will not break the bruised reed.

Oh, dearer than my failing words express,
  Is Nature's beauty to this heart of mine;

Yet for the soul's most utter weariness
  She has no balm nor any anodyne;
Her "changeful glories" may not heal or bless
  The human heart which cries for the divine.

This I have learnt, that God surrounds us all
  With blessings numberless from day to day,
As round the tents of Israel did fall
  The manna from God's hand to be their stay.
Could we but count our pleasures great and small,
  Our thanks would leave us little time to pray.*

Kind voices, loving thoughts, words of a friend,
  The happy sunshine, the reviving air,
Music—a thousand pleasures without end,
  That renovate the spirit unaware.
These I have learnt to know that God doth send
  For joys and griefs alike are in His care.

He gives us small delights for our relief,
  Striving by every means to win our love,

* "Wenn Du Gott wolltest Dank für jede Lust erst sagen, Du fändest gar nicht Zeit, noch über Weh zu klagen."—*Friedrich Rückert.*

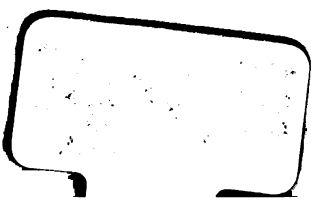
That we may learn that not the meanest grief
  Is counted worthless in His eyes above,
Who gives for passing woes and sufferings brief
  Large consolations and eternal love.

And I have learnt that when His voice is dumb,
  And all around is cold and dark and drear;
Sometimes the word of help and light will come
  All unexpected from some friend most dear,
Waking to double joy the heart once numb
  Who thought not of the love that lay so near.

Oh, we can help by heart and prayer and hand
  Our fellow-travellers in this wilderness;
Not till we reach the long-desired land
  Shall we have learnt how human love can bless.
Oh, welcome grief that makes us understand
  To help or heal another's weariness!

God's grace is all around us everywhere;
  We cannot flee from Him who works us good.
True human teaching, human help, and prayer,
  Are gifts from Him who gives us daily food.
He cares for us, and our most secret care
  We cast on Him, by men misunderstood.

As I look back over my life to-night,
  I know that, looking back, my eyes are dim;
I have not done that which I knew was right,
  I have not wholly loved and followed Him.
Yet *this I feel*, "His love is infinite,
  And all things work their good who trust in Him."

THE END.

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